

## **GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION**

**Wednesday, June 14, 2006 – 4:00 pm**

**Council Chambers – 300 W. Washington Street**

**PRESENT:** Robert Douglas, III, Marc Bush, Rose Marie Ponton, Judi Rossabi, Randy Scott

**ABSENT:** Lori Galbreath, David Hoggard, Cheryl Wilson

**STAFF PRESENT:** Candice Bruton, Jenny Caviness, Ed Deaton, Mitzi Dew, Courtney Hemphill, John Hughes, Bonnie Kuester, Dan Maxson, Brooks Mullane, Laurie Thore, Heather Ulrich, Bernadette White, Chris Wilson

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held in the City Council Chambers. Robert Douglas, III, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

### **Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of the May 10, 2006 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted.

### **Recognition**

Bonnie Kuester, Director, announced the Parks and Recreation Employee of the Month for June, Gordon Summers. Chris Wilson, Division Manager, accepted Summers award on his behalf.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Ole Asheboro Park Update**

Candice Bruton, Planning Specialist, Parks and Recreation, stated that the Parks and Recreation Department is pleased to be presenting a very generous land donation. Lorna and Herman Heyge along with Kathy Treanor from Piedmont Land Conservancy (PLC) are present today and have been working very steadily for many months to make this donation to the city and Parks and Recreation possible.

Bruton stated that this donated land is approximately one acre located at the corner of East Lee and Arlington Streets adjacent from the Music Garden. This park will offer opportunity in an urbanized area to have some green space and park land to an area that is currently not being served with a park. The approval of this donation would take us one step further in making this park a reality and a real gem for this portion of the community.

Bruton turned the presentation over to Kathy Treanor, representative, PLC.

Treanor informed the Commission that in 1999 the Heyge's approached PLC with an interest in donating a portion of their property, previously a gas station facility. This is an unusual project for PLC, as PLC doesn't often have the opportunity to convert a developed area back to natural landscape. The neighborhood residents are supportive of this park. DH Griffin has agreed to remove the concrete free of charge. Once redevelopment occurs, with the approval of Parks and Recreation, the existing fence will be removed.

Treanor stated to the Commission that PLC appreciates their consideration with hopes of moving forward.

Kathy Treanor turned the presentation over to Lorna Heyge.

Lorna Heyge stated that in 1999 she and her husband were looking for a larger space for their business. They were shown this property which consisted of an existing building and 208 parking places. Once inspected by Robin Britt, it was decided that the building was a good location for their business; however in place of parking space, Herman and she envisioned trees.

For many years Heyge has been a volunteer in the Head Start Program working with Robin Britt and has had the privilege of working with Dorothy Brown and the Ole Asheboro group. The Heyge's are pleased to have the Commission consider this project with hopes of it soon becoming a reality.

Kuester read a prepared statement on behalf of absent Commissioner Palmer Smith McIntyre, "This is a wonderful opportunity for the city to provide much needed green space along this industrial zone on Lee Street. This property is a generous gift to the city. Given the intense competition for bond money this year perhaps some outside sources can be leveraged to help create a special natural area since it is a unique concept supported by the neighborhood. Much gratitude goes to Lorna and Herman Heyge for their generosity and perseverance. It is not easy converting industrial land to park land. The Piedmont Land Conservancy has been especially pleased to help facilitate this project."

Douglas stated that this is a perfect example of the private/public partnership that we have come to know and need tremendously in this time of budget crunches and expressed appreciation of this vision.

Bruton added that the development of this area is on the proposed bond package for November 2006. In addition, the neighborhood community has submitted a small neighborhood project/program grant. We are looking ahead towards development hopefully with some help from the proposed bond referendum.

#### **Action Taken**

**A motion was made by Robert Douglass, III, and seconded by Randy Scott to approve this land donation. A vote in favor was unanimous.**

#### **Accreditation Wrap-Up**

Bernadette White, Project Coordinator, stated that the Accreditation process began two and a half years ago, involving preparations, revisions, updates, research development, and completion of a full assessment of the department during this time. The Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) Visitation Team visited Parks and Recreation May 9-12, 2006 spending these four days going through the department files, manuals, visiting facilities, and meeting our staff. The purpose of this visit was to confirm whether or not we have met the applicable standards for accreditation. On the final day they met with Bonnie Kuester and department representatives to present the preliminary report on their findings. They were very complimentary of our department and discussed our strengths and weaknesses. From this point, they return to their locations, pull together their report, and then submit it to CAPRA. Presently, we are waiting to receive the report from CAPRA. Once received, we acknowledge the report and are given thirty days to respond to any recommendations, concerns, and gather additional information they may need. Once this is complete, they review this information. Then, in October 2006, Bonnie Kuester and/or representatives will travel to Seattle, Washington for the 2006 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Congress. There they will meet with CAPRA and the Visitation Team Chair. CAPRA and the Visitation Team Chair will have discussions, and then they will determine if we will be accredited.

#### **Budget and Updates**

Kuester stated that City Council requested City of Greensboro Departments to look at opportunities to help reduce the original projected tax increase of 5.25 %. In the Parks and Recreation Department this was a significant dollar amount that required us to, unfortunately, look at positions and programs.

Kuester continued stating that this was a difficult task and applauded everyone who worked on this across the department. Our goal was to be fair and to give serious consideration to everything we discussed, not knowing whether or not if all reductions that were submitted would be partially or entirely taken, or perhaps no reductions at all. City Council wanted to review what

it would look like to have no tax increase. In order to totally reduce the tax increase it was significant, in terms of service reductions, across the city organization. City Council looked very carefully at every proposal.

Kuester gave credit to City Council for having spent this year in a very changed budget process in that they, in small committee groups, very carefully study the departments. City Council members divided into three groups and each group had 3-4 departments to look at department budgets, look at how we got there, and look at what we do. City Council went to the table with additional knowledge this year, which works in the favor of the organization and citizens. The potential final vote on the budget will be Tuesday, June 20, 2006.

Dan Maxson, Division Manager, stated that this has been a difficult time for staff as well as City Council. Everyone associated with the city is committed to the programs and tax payers in providing the best service, but the economy is such that the city can not do everything it wants to. Therefore, the list that Parks and Recreation put together to meet the target that the City Manager's Office identified represented a little over eight hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000) worth of considerations. This is a significant amount of our budget and City Council deliberations did not rush through the process. City Council looked at each and every item on the entire list from every department. If items listed for Parks and Recreation are approved on June 20, 2006 a couple of areas will be impacted in our department. The first possible impactment, and we do not know the extent of this, is the reduction in our marketing and advertising budget, in which money would likely be transferred from our departmental marketing budget to the Organizational Development and Communication Department in order to continue printing city-wide communication printed pieces. Our department may contribute money towards the continuation of that printed material that goes out to the public. The extent of this reallocation is not known at this time. Another area that has been most talked about is position reductions. Four positions impacted are, one, a vacant part-time maintenance position at the Bryan Park Soccer Complex. Duties of this position would be absorbed by the remaining staff at the Bryan Park Soccer Complex. The remaining three positions are occupied full-time positions. The first is an office assistant position in our park maintenance area. The second position is the Park Assistant Supervisor at Tannenbaum Park. The third position is a program specialist at the Sportsplex. The city never likes to do position reductions; however it does have good policy in place that has proved successful in the past. Whenever the city eliminates a position it doesn't necessarily eliminate the person, it eliminates the position itself. In our cases, the Reduction of Force Policy would take effect on June 20, 2006. If the budget is approved with any reductions, it would be effective July 1, 2006 or other dates that may become necessary. In the new budget year the Reduction in Force Policy will have the city's Human Resource Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and the City Manager's Office looking at other vacancies throughout the city to see where the individuals may be placed. For example, at the Sportsplex we have the program specialist who is in charge of the inline roller hockey program. Currently, there is a vacant thirty hour benefited position at the Sportsplex and it would be our intention to move the employee from a full-time status into the thirty hour benefited position, as has been discussed with this employee. Although it will have some impact on roller hockey as the program will be somewhat diminished, we believe that the program that we would offer would still meet what the community needs and still allow the Sportsplex facility to continue to grow programs. The long term impact of this will be the employee in this position will remain in a benefited position and still offer a level of hockey at the Sportsplex.

Maxson continued stating that the city really tries to place the employees in other positions and we feel confident that we can place at least two of our effected employees in other positions. Although with the loss of positions there may be the diminishing of programs. In some cases we believe the city will be able to address the needs of the employees and continue their employment with the city, although there is no guarantee. We are working hard as this is our goal at this point. During our July 2006 Commission meeting, the Commission and public will be given an update on the final vote of the budget and the true impact as we will know at that point.

Rose Marie Ponton, Commissioner, asked that the Commission be provided with a list of the proposed Parks and Recreation reductions. Ponton also asked if the reduction in force positions could remain vacant and then reinstated at a later date.

Maxson replied stating that the city's budgeting process is that if we have a position number representing a position that it must budget for that position. It was the intention of City Council for these cuts to be sustainable; therefore these positions will disappear and not be budgeted.

Randy Scott, Commissioner, asked if these reductions will affect the Accreditation process.

Maxson replied stating that this will not effect Accreditation. Maxson stated that Bloomington, North Carolina recently went through the re-accreditation process and that their budget had been cut by millions of dollars right before re-accreditation. Their department weathered that by showing they had good plans in place such as for a reduction in force, training opportunities, and were also able to demonstrate that the programs that they continued were based on public input. The accreditation process considered that kind of information; therefore I believe we will be fine with accreditation.

Marc Bush, Commissioner, asked if the marketing reduction dollars is included with the eight hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000). Bush stated the importance of and how crucial it is to be able to communicate to the citizens so that they may take advantage of Parks and Recreation opportunities.

Maxson replied stating that the marketing reduction is not included in the (\$800,000). That was an item that the City Manager's Office felt was important because in order to achieve their budget objective they would need to reduce the ODC budget, but recognizing the importance of and priority of city-wide communication. Money will be pulled from other departments that have marketing and communication budget so we can continue city-wide communication.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Trail Naming Request**

Jack Jezorek, representative, Audubon Society, came before the Commission to request their approval for naming a trail in the T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Natural Area for Tom Hilmer. This natural area is an eleven acre piece of property owned by Cone Hospital just north of the hospital between Elm and Church Streets along Tankersley Drive. This property was leased to the city for ninety-nine years in the late 1970's or early 1980's to be used as a natural area. In the mid 1980's the city entered into a contractual management agreement with the T. Gilbert Pearson Audubon Society to take care of this property.

Jezorek stated that T. Gilbert Pearson was an environmental activist from Florida native who came to Greensboro to attend Guilford College. In 1902 he instituted the Audubon Society of North Carolina. Pearson was continuously in Raleigh at the General Assembly. Pearson helped pass the Audubon law, which instituted a system of game wardens and rangers. Pearson was called to New York in 1905 to help start the National Audubon Society.

Jezorek continued stating that Tom Hilmer was an Audubon member who passed away last year. Hilmer installed fifteen to sixteen blue bird houses along the North Buffalo Creek Greenway between Elam Avenue and Smith Street. Several years ago Hilmer took over the management for the Audubon chapter of this natural area. The trail had become overgrown with honeysuckle and poison ivy. Hilmer cleaned out this area and lined the trail with logs and installed trail markers so people could see where to walk. Hilmer worked in the pharmacy department at Cone Memorial Hospital and, along with hospital workers and Audubon members, would spend lunch hours working on this natural area. Members of the Audubon Society and Hilmer's fellow employees

feel it would be most fitting to name the trail for Tom Hilmer. This is a loop trail that runs from the entrance of the natural area on Tankersley Drive down to the creek and back again.

Kuester stated that the Parks and Recreation Naming Facility Policy states that that proposed naming request must be posted at the property for thirty days giving those who oppose the option of coming forth at the next Commission meeting.

### **GYC Carnival Volunteer Report**

Jenny Caviness, Coordinator, Greensboro Youth Council (GYC), introduced Brian Clark, GYC Chair and member of GYC for four years.

Clark stated that the GYC 2005-06 donations and grants totaled thirty-five thousand twenty-four dollars and eighty-five cents (\$35,024.85). The 2006 GYC Carnival revenue totaled sixty-four thousand five hundred thirty-nine dollars (\$64,539.00). GYC totaled thirteen thousand one hundred twenty-two volunteer hours which comes to two hundred thirty-six thousand seven hundred twenty dollars and eighty-eight cents (\$236,720.88). The total contribution for GYC 2005-06 is three hundred thirty-six thousand two hundred eighty-four dollars and seventy-three cents (\$336,284.73).

Caviness stated that Clark is the first person in over ten years to get over two thousand hours of community service volunteer hours. Caviness presented a plaque to Clark for his dedication and volunteer efforts with GYC.

Ponton stated that the GYC Banquet was a wonderful occasion and that the GYC program is in good hands. Ponton commended Caviness and Clark for their efforts with GYC.

### **SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR**

-NONE-

### **DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS**

Kuester stated that Claire Roberts has reported that Bur-Mil Park's Wildlife Education Center has two new full grown Russian Tortoises, which were donated by a local family.

Chris Wilson added that a four foot iguana will be joining the Wildlife Education Center and will be introduced to the public next week.

Kuester stated that, as part of the budget cuts, the ODC Department submitted several meetings that they televise as possible reductions in their budget. City Council determined that they would accept eliminating the Human Relations Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission. Therefore, this will be our last Parks and Recreation Commission meeting in this venue. Kuester stated that Commission meetings were held throughout Parks and Recreation facilities before Commission meetings were televised; therefore the next Parks and Recreation Commission will be held at Barber Park in the Simkins Pavilion on July 12, 2006 at 6:00.

Douglas encouraged the Commission that if they have a preference as to where future meetings should take place to contact Bonnie Kuester or staff.

### **COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS**

**Rose Marie Ponton** stated that she attended the Accreditation events held at Bur-Mil Park and the Arboretum and commended staff on their hard work through the Accreditation process. Ponton also stated that she attended the Greensboro Beautiful landscape luncheon and commended staff on making Greensboro a beautiful city.

**Robert Douglas, III** encouraged Commissioners to attend the Citizen Board Member Conference that will be held on August 3-5, 2006.

With no further business, Douglas adjourned the meeting at 4:51 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant  
Greensboro Parks and Recreation